HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

A Play About Kirsten

PLAY SCRIPT

THE AMERICAN GIRLS COLLECTION®

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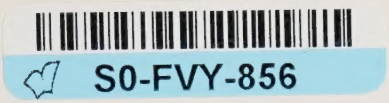
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HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

A Play About Kirsten

CHARACTERS

KIRSTEN

A nine-year-old Swedish immigrant who is starting a new life in America

MARTA

Kirsten's best friend, who becomes ill on their journey

MAMA

Kirsten's mother, who worries about keeping her family safe on their journey

PAPA

Kirsten's father, who is leading his family to their new home

LISBETH

Kirsten's American cousin, who is eleven years old

ANNA

Lisbeth's younger sister, who is seven years old

The action takes place in the summer of 1854, on a journey from Sweden to Minnesota.

ACT ONE

Scene: A park near the docks in New York City.

*(**Kirsten** and **Marta** ENTER. Each girl holds a doll and carries a small bundle. They look around curiously.)*

KIRSTEN: America! *(excitedly)* We're finally here, Marta! In America! I'm so glad to be here at last.

MARTA: I am, too! And I'm glad to get off that ship!

KIRSTEN: Me, too! *(She runs a few steps.)* Just smell the air. Mmm! It's so good to smell land again.

MARTA: *(following)* And to feel land under your feet!

*(**Kirsten** sways a little.)*

KIRSTEN: Yes! But Marta, does the land seem to be moving under your feet?

MARTA: Yes! The ground is spinning around me!

*(**Kirsten** and **Marta** put down their bundles and sit, holding their heads.)*

*(**Mama** ENTERS. She laughs at them kindly. She kneels down between them.)*

MAMA: Do you feel dizzy? Your legs will have to get used to dry land again after three months at sea. *(smiling)* We will have a lot to get used to here in America!

KIRSTEN: Everything in America will be new to us. *(eagerly)* May we go look around the city, Mama?

MAMA: No, Kirsten. You could easily get lost. New York is a big city. Everyone is a stranger and you don't speak English yet. Papa has gone to buy tickets for the rest of our journey to Minnesota. Later you may go with him to buy some bread and milk. We'll wait here in the shade until he gets back.

*(**Kirsten, Marta,** and **Mama** sit on the grass. The girls start to play with their dolls.)*

MARTA: *(after playing awhile)* Summer is so hot in America! It's only June, and the grass is already as dry as straw.

KIRSTEN: Yes, it's much hotter than Sweden. *(She fans herself with her hand.)* Even without my quilted petticoats, I'm hot! Will it be this hot in Minnesota, Mama?

MAMA: I don't know, Kirsten. Minnesota is a long way from here. We will have to wait and see.

*(**Papa** ENTERS. He carries a basket full of cherries.)*

PAPA: Kirsten! Mama! Look what I have brought. Cherries!

*(**Papa** stoops down to take cherries from the basket for Mama, Kirsten, and Marta, who eat with great pleasure.)*

MAMA: Oh, I've never seen such huge cherries!

KIRSTEN: Mmm! They're good! And so big!

PAPA: Everything in America is big! Wait until you see the city! And there will be more to see tomorrow. I just bought tickets for our trip to Minnesota. We leave in the morning.

MAMA: *(worried)* Did you find an honest agent? Old Mr. Peterson was cheated of his money by a dishonest agent.

PAPA: *(firmly)* Our agent is a good man. He left Sweden four years ago, and he knows English well. He helped me change our money at a bank.

MAMA: *(sighing)* It's hard, trusting strangers. We are so far from our old home and our old friends. It has been a long, hard journey from Sweden. Now we must go all the way to Minnesota.

PAPA: *(sits near her)* Don't worry. The agent will guide us. He says we will have to travel only a few weeks more. And now that we're on land, it will be easier. We will feel stronger.

KIRSTEN: Don't lose heart, Mama. *(She hugs Mama.)*

MAMA: *(smiling)* No, I won't lose heart now. I know we'll be in our new home soon!

PAPA: *(He stands and helps Mama up.)* Come with me, Mama, and meet the agent and the families we will be traveling with.

*(**Papa** and **Mama** EXIT.)*

*(**Kirsten** and **Marta** continue to eat cherries.)*

KIRSTEN: Papa said we are leaving for Minnesota tomorrow. Are you and your family going tomorrow too, Marta?

MARTA: *(sadly)* Not until the next day.

KIRSTEN: Oh no! I was so sure our families would be traveling together!

MARTA: Me too. Are you going to take another ship now?

KIRSTEN: No, I think we are going to take a train to a place called Chicago. *(pauses)* What do you think a train looks like?

MARTA: I don't know exactly. My father says it will make a loud noise and a lot of smoke. We might be afraid of trains.

KIRSTEN: *(grinning)* Noise won't hurt us! Papa says a train is like many wagons all traveling together. Maybe you'll get on our train. Wouldn't that be lucky?

MARTA: Or maybe we won't ever see each other again.

KIRSTEN: *(confidently)* But your family is going to Minnesota, just like mine is. We are sure to meet on the way. At least, I hope so!

MARTA: I hope so, too. *(pauses)* I'll be so lonely without you, Kirsten.

KIRSTEN: *(taking her hand)* I'll be lonely, too. Sometimes I wonder if I'll ever feel at home in America. But I'll tell you what my grandmother said to me when we left Sweden. She said, "When you're lonely, look at the sun. Remember that we all see the same sun."

MARTA: Do you do that? Do you look at the sun and think of your grandmother?

KIRSTEN: Yes. When I'm homesick, I look at the sun and think of her. Then I'm not as homesick anymore.

MARTA: *(with a small smile)* When I get lonely, I'll look at the sun and think of you. But I'll still miss you, Kirsten.

KIRSTEN: I'll miss you too, Marta. But I'll look at the sun and think of you. Then I'll say a prayer. I'll say, "God bless Marta."

MARTA: I'll say a prayer, too. And I'll be looking for you everywhere!

*(From OFFSTAGE, **Mama** calls.)*

MAMA'S VOICE: Kirsten! Kirsten! Come here now!

KIRSTEN: I have to go now. Good-bye, Marta!

(Both girls stand up. ***Kirsten*** *hugs Marta and holds her doll up for Marta to kiss, then EXITS, running.)*

MARTA: Good-bye, Kirsten! Good-bye!

*(****Marta*** *waves and EXITS, other side.)*

ACT TWO

Scene: The sunny backyard of a Chicago boarding house.

*(**Kirsten** and **Mama** ENTER. They start to do laundry. They scrub their clothes, hang them on a line, and fold and stack dry things.)*

KIRSTEN: Wasn't the train fast, Mama? It was faster than the fastest horse.

MAMA: Yes, and dirtier than the dirtiest horse, too! Coal grit on the floor and cinders in the air! I'm glad to wash those days and days of soot and smoke out of our clothes. And it was so hot! I thought we would roast on that train!

KIRSTEN: I think our Swedish clothes are too hot for America. *(dreamily)* I wish we could wear pretty dresses like American ladies do. They look so much nicer than our wool skirts and shawls. And cooler, too.

MAMA: Our clothes are clean and sturdy. We don't need to be ashamed of them. Besides, how could I milk cows on Uncle Olav's farm in Minnesota if I wore ruffles?

KIRSTEN: You're right, Mama. Tell me again about Uncle Olav and the farm.

MAMA: Olav left Sweden six years ago, when you were just three. He thought he could make a better life in America. And last year, he wrote to tell us about his new farm. The land is rich and good there, and he needs our help.

KIRSTEN: Now tell the best part. Tell about Uncle Olav's family.

MAMA: *(smiling)* Uncle Olav married Aunt Inger in America. She came from Sweden, too. She was a widow with two daughters about your age. Their names are Anna and Lisbeth.

KIRSTEN: They are my cousins. Do you think we will be friends, Mama?

MAMA: Of course. We'll live on the same farm, and they will be right next door.

KIRSTEN: I hope Marta doesn't live too far away. She will always be my best friend.

*(**Marta** ENTERS. She sneaks up behind Kirsten and taps her on the shoulder.)*

MARTA: Kirsten Larson!

KIRSTEN: Marta! You're here! You're here!

*(**Kirsten** and **Marta** hold hands and whirl around and around. **Mama** smiles at them as she continues working.)*

MARTA: And you're here, too! Oh, I missed you!

KIRSTEN: I missed you, too! But whenever I felt lonely, I looked at the sun and thought about you.

MARTA: I looked at the sun, too! It always made me feel better. But wasn't the train terrible? *(She shakes her head.)* It was so loud and hot and smoky!

KIRSTEN: But it brought us both to Chicago so that we are together again.

MARTA: Yes! Tonight our families will have dinner together and sleep under the same roof. And we are going to walk together from Chicago to the Mississippi River. Then we will be on the same riverboat! My father said that our families will stay together until we land in Minnesota.

KIRSTEN: Oh, that's wonderful! I can't believe our good luck.

MAMA: We are lucky. *(She picks up the folded laundry.)* Come along, girls. I want to talk to Marta's mother. We will plan a special dinner to celebrate being together.

*(**Mama** EXITS with the laundry.)*

KIRSTEN: Tonight we will have clean clothes, good food, a real bed to sleep in, and friends nearby. You know, Marta, I think America may be a good home for us all.

*(**Kirsten** and **Marta** EXIT.)*

ACT THREE

Scene: Evening on the deck of a riverboat.

*(**Kirsten** ENTERS. She looks out at the water and up at the sky. She seems to be waiting for someone.)*

*(**Marta** ENTERS. She looks weak and speaks in a hoarse whisper.)*

MARTA: Kirsten!

KIRSTEN: *(She turns and speaks impatiently.)* *There* you are, Marta! I have been waiting and waiting for you. The sun is going down. I have already counted six fish jumping from the water. And look! See the hawk circling overhead?

MARTA: Yes, I—

*(**Marta** looks up, then suddenly clutches her stomach and falls to her knees.)*

MARTA: *(groaning)* Oh!....Oh!

KIRSTEN: *(kneeling to help)* Marta! Are you all right? What's the matter? What's wrong? What's wrong?

MARTA: *(slowly, weakly)* I don't...I don't know. I feel terrible. I'm hot, then cold, and my stomach hurts.

KIRSTEN: Oh, Marta! You're shivering!

MARTA: It's so dark, and so cold.

*(**Marta** shivers and hugs herself.)*

KIRSTEN: Here! I'll put my shawl around you.

MARTA: *(moaning)* Kirsten, I'm so sick.

*(**Marta** slumps against Kirsten.)*

KIRSTEN: Don't worry, Marta. I'll help you. Lean on me. *(worried)* We've got to get you inside to your mama. Can you stand up? Hold on to me. Slowly, now...

*(**Kirsten** puts Marta's arm over her shoulder and tries to help her stand.)*

MARTA: I…I can't….

*(**Marta** collapses to the ground in a faint.)*

KIRSTEN: *(frightened)* Marta! Marta! Oh no! Help! Mama, Papa! Help! Help!

*(**Mama** and **Papa** ENTER, looking alarmed.)*

PAPA: What is it? What's happened?

MAMA: What's the matter?

KIRSTEN: *(very scared)* It's Marta! Look! Is she …?

MAMA: *(kneeling over Marta)* She has fainted. Oh no! The poor child is burning up with fever.

KIRSTEN: But she was shivering before! What's the matter, Mama? What is it? What's wrong with Marta?

*(**Mama** looks sadly at Papa. **Papa** nods.)*

MAMA: Marta is very sick, Kirsten. I think it is cholera. We have to get her to bed.

KIRSTEN: Cholera! No! It can't be! She was fine yesterday!

*(**Papa** hugs Kirsten.)*

PAPA: Calm yourself, Kirsten. Cholera comes on quickly and quickly becomes serious. Mama and I will take care of Marta. We will take her to her parents. You must go—

KIRSTEN: *(breaking in)* No! I have to stay with Marta! I have to!

PAPA: Kirsten, cholera is dangerous. You could get sick, too. Now go. Do as you are told!

KIRSTEN: *(softly, almost crying)* Poor Marta! My poor friend! You must get well. You must!

*(**Mama** and **Papa** EXIT, carrying Marta.)*

*(**Kirsten** EXITS slowly, other side.)*

ACT FOUR

Scene: In the sick bay, just before dawn. Marta is lying on a straw mattress on the floor.

*(**Kirsten** ENTERS. She kneels beside Marta. **Marta** moans and rolls her head from side to side. **Kirsten** smooths the pillow and puts Marta's doll next to her in bed.)*

MARTA: *(whispering)* Kirsten?

KIRSTEN: Yes, I'm here, Marta.

MARTA: You shouldn't be here.

KIRSTEN: I had to see you. Do you feel better?

MARTA: I'm tired. I just feel very tired.

KIRSTEN: Papa says we will get to Minnesota today, Marta. When we get to Minnesota, we will be home. You will feel better.

MARTA: No, I don't think so, Kirsten.

KIRSTEN: Of course you will! You must get well. I will hate Minnesota if you aren't well and we can't play together there. It will never feel like home then.

MARTA: *(slowly, weakly)* You mustn't say that. Home is wherever you have friends. Your cousins will be your friends. They will make you feel at home.

KIRSTEN: *(takes Marta's hand)* But you are my best friend! I'll be so lonely if we are not together!

MARTA: *(looking toward the window)* Look, Kirsten. The sun is coming up.

KIRSTEN: *(nodding)* Yes, I see it.

MARTA: Remember what your grandmother told you? Remember what you and I said about the sun?

KIRSTEN: Whenever I miss you, whenever I am lonely, I should look at the sun and think of you.

MARTA: Remember, we all see the same sun.

KIRSTEN: But Marta...

MARTA: *(whispering)* God bless you, Kirsten.

*(**Marta** dies.)*

KIRSTEN: Marta? Marta! Oh, Marta!

*(**Kirsten** holds Marta's hand to her cheek and cries. **Mama** and **Papa** ENTER. They kneel behind Kirsten.)*

MAMA: Kirsten!

KIRSTEN: She's dead, Mama. Marta is dead.

MAMA: The poor child!

PAPA: God rest her soul.

KIRSTEN: *(sobbing)* Marta, Marta. My friend.

PAPA: *(standing up)* Come, Kirsten. We must go. *(gently helping her up)* The boat has docked. It is time for us to go ashore.

*(**Mama** stands up.)*

KIRSTEN: But what will happen to Marta?

PAPA: *(gently)* The sailors will bury her here. Her soul is in heaven.

KIRSTEN: No, no!

*(**Kirsten** sobs and buries her head in her arms.)*

PAPA: There, there. Enough tears. Stop now, Kirsten.

MAMA: Let her have her tears.

*(**Mama** and **Papa** put their arms around Kirsten. **Kirsten** looks up at the sun.)*

KIRSTEN: *(softly)* God bless you, Marta!

*(**Kirsten, Mama,** and **Papa** EXIT.)*

ACT FIVE

Scene: A rainy afternoon on the road to Uncle Olav's farm.

(Sound effects of rain.)

*(**Papa** and **Mama** ENTER. They are carrying heavy bundles. They are tired. **Papa** brushes rain from his clothes as he looks back over his shoulder.)*

PAPA: Where is Kirsten?

MAMA: She's a little way behind us.

PAPA: Let's stop here and wait for her. It's not raining quite so hard anymore.

MAMA: All right. Let's rest on this rock.

*(**Mama** and **Papa** put their bundles down and sit on the rock.)*

PAPA: Is your bundle heavy, Mama?

MAMA: It *is* too heavy, but that is my own fault. I wanted to bring too many things.

PAPA: I'm sorry we did not have enough money left to rent a horse and wagon.

MAMA: We have our good legs. I don't mind walking. But I am sorry we had to leave the trunks behind. Almost everything we own is in those trunks.

PAPA: It can't be helped. We'll send for the trunks soon. Don't lose heart.

MAMA: I won't. *(sincerely)* People are more important than things. I thank God we are all together and well.

PAPA: *(looking around at the land)* Olav wrote us the truth. The soil here is good. We'll have a better life.

*(**Kirsten** ENTERS, carrying a bundle and looking very sad.)*

MAMA: *(gently)* Kirsten, put your bundle down. Rest for a while.

KIRSTEN: Yes, Mama.

*(**Kirsten** puts her bundle down and sits beside Mama.)*

PAPA: Cheer up, Kirsten. It can't be too much farther to your Uncle Olav's farm. *(standing up)* I'll walk on and ask the way at this farm up ahead.

*(**Papa** EXITS with his bundle.)*

MAMA: Oh, Kirsten, look at you! Your skirt is soaked through to your petticoat. Try to scrape some of the mud off your boots.

KIRSTEN: I wish this rain would stop.

MAMA: The rain will stop soon. And we will be home soon.

KIRSTEN: *(angrily)* Minnesota will never be home for me.

MAMA: Kirsten!

KIRSTEN: *(stubbornly)* It won't! Not without Marta!

MAMA: Oh, my poor Kirsten. *(gently hugging her)* Didn't Marta say, "Home is wherever you have friends"?

KIRSTEN: *(frustrated)* Yes, but I don't have any friends here. Marta was my oldest and best friend. She was my only friend in America. Now she is gone. And there isn't even any sun to look at when I am lonely for her.

MAMA: Old friends are very dear, and we always carry them in our hearts. But we must leave room in our hearts for new friends, too. *(gently but firmly)* Your cousins Anna and Lisbeth will be good friends if you let them, Kirsten. And Uncle Olav and Aunt Inger want to share their farm with us. They want us to make it our home. Promise me you'll try.

KIRSTEN: All right, Mama. I promise.

MAMA: Then I promise you will soon be happy here in Minnesota. *(standing up)* Now we had better catch up with Papa.

*(**Mama** lifts her bundle and starts to walk. As she does, the sun comes out.)*

KIRSTEN: *(calling)* Look, Mama, the sun is coming out!

MAMA: Of course it is. Now come along.

*(**Mama** EXITS.)*

*(**Kirsten** stops to look up at the sun.)*

KIRSTEN: God bless you, Marta! Oh, Marta, I wish you were here to be my friend. But I will try to leave room in my heart for new friends.

*(**Anna** and **Lisbeth** ENTER. Anna is carrying a small bouquet of wildflowers. They call out happy greetings as they run across the stage to Kirsten.)*

ANNA: Hello! Hello!

LISBETH: It's you! At last!

*(**Anna** and **Lisbeth** hug Kirsten.)*

LISBETH: You must be Kirsten! I'm Lisbeth! I've watched for you every single day.

ANNA: *(very excitedly)* I've watched, too! I'm Anna!

LISBETH: Come along and meet our mama and papa. Then we'll show you your cabin.

ANNA: Yes! Come and see your new American home.

LISBETH: Oh, Kirsten, we're so glad you're here! You'll live right next door, and we'll be friends.

*(**Lisbeth** nudges Anna with her elbow to remind her about the flowers.)*

ANNA: Yes! We will all be friends! *(handing flowers to Kirsten)* And these are for you! Welcome home, Kirsten, welcome home!

KIRSTEN: *(smelling the flowers)* Thank you! It's good to be home at last!

*(**Kirsten, Lisbeth,** and **Anna** EXIT happily.)*

TIPS FOR ACTORS

❤ Use your imagination. If you don't have a fancy stage or elaborate props and costumes, act as if you do!

❤ Speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard. Don't turn your back to the audience or stand between another actor and the audience.

❤ Pretend that you **are** the character you are playing. If you forget your lines and can't hear the prompter, think about what the character would really say and say it in your own words.

❤ Act and speak at the same time. Directions before your lines will tell you things to do as you are saying those lines. For example,

> (***Kirsten*** sways a little.)
>
> **KIRSTEN**: Yes! But Marta, does the land seem to be moving under your feet?

❤ Other directions make suggestions about how to say a line. For example,

> **MARTA:** (whispering) Kirsten?

❤ Cooperate with the director and the other actors. And don't forget to smile at the curtain call!

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